

Thursday, April 12, 12

A-ADM DRAFT 12\C2\Turkey

[I don't think I've ever written this before, or told it; it's not a memory I'm proud of.

But it does reveal where I was as a Cold Warrior; and what my subjective impression of the state of the crisis was, at its height.]

Wednesday, September 14, 2011
8:29 AM

\C-II\Saturday, Oct. 27 Turkey

[from Prospectus, 1988:

ITEM: On the night of President Kennedy's television announcement of the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, Monday, October 22, 1962, my friend Harry Rowen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans and Policy, International Security Affairs, asked me to come to Washington to help out. I took the next plane from Los Angeles and spent several days of that week sleeping on a sofa in the Pentagon.

I worked on two of the three Working Groups that reported that week to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (Excom), an ad hoc group that sat with the President and managed the Cuban Missile Crisis. One of these, chaired by Walt Rostow in the State Department, did "long range planning," looking two weeks ahead. The other, under Rowen in Defense, made plans for an air strike against the air defenses and missiles and an invasion of Cuba, scheduled tentatively for Monday or Tuesday, October 29 or 30.

On Saturday night, the 27th, Robert Kennedy delivered the President's ultimatum to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin: if the missiles were not removed immediately they would be struck. He set (he later told me) a 48-hour deadline. He also warned that U.S. reconnaissance flights over Cuba would continue, and that if one more plane was shot down--as had happened that very morning--the U.S. would launch air strikes immediately. He rejected the Soviet proposal for ending the crisis, a public trade of the Soviet missiles in Cuba for removal of the comparable U.S. missiles in Turkey.¹

President Kennedy was convinced that if he had to carry out this ultimatum, the Soviets would almost surely retaliate by attacking our missiles in Turkey. On Saturday

afternoon, October 27, Rowen was asked by Secretary McNamara, for the Excom, to lay out alternative options for a U.S. response to a Soviet non-nuclear attack on the U.S. missiles assigned to NATO, in Turkey. Harry called me in to work on this, and the two of us sat at opposite sides of his desk, writing as fast as we could.

The first option we presented was "No further U.S. response": in effect calling it "even," missiles destroyed in Turkey for missiles destroyed in Cuba, seeking to end hostilities there. We took some pride, I recall, in beginning with that, since we felt that few advisors in that era would have had the nerve to include that as a policy option.

Other choices included non-nuclear reprisal on the Soviet base from which their attack had been launched; or on several more bases; with or without hitting Soviet air defense bases...]

In mid-morning, Harry Rowen told me he'd been asked by McNamara to develop a list of possible responses if the Soviets reacted to our attack on their missiles in Cuba by attacking NATO missiles in Turkey. We sat at opposite sides of the large desk in his office with yellow pads and began trading thoughts on options and writing them down.

In theory, the US (and every other member of NATO) was committed to treating any attack on any other member as if it were an attack on itself. What would we have done if the Soviets had attacked a single American SAC base, say, in Spain or Libya or England, with conventional bombs? (We assumed a Soviet attack on the IRBMs in Turkey would be non-nuclear, like our attack in Cuba).

Under Eisenhower's definition of general war—armed conflict with Soviet forces--that would have meant for us, almost surely, responding with a full-scale nuclear first-strike against the Soviet Union. But that showed up the absurdity of that strategic doctrine, which Harry and I had participated in replacing the previous year.

Even Eisenhower would have been extremely unlikely to have ordered that plan carried out, although he had forbidden the preparation of any alternate plans for such circumstances. After all, the premise here, in this unforeseen crisis, was that we had just attacked an isolated set of Soviet missiles near our shores with "iron bombs." There had been no US contingency plans for anything like *that*. For the Soviets to mirror that action with a conventional attack on US-supplied missiles next to their own border seemed to most members of the ExComm, starting with the president, a logical "minimum" response, the least we could expect if they were going to respond at all to the attack on their own forces. I

If we were going to take that as the occasion for all-out nuclear war, we might as well execute the SIOP along with the sorties against Cuba. LeMay would probably

have favored that, and perhaps a few others, but not many military and no civilian officials.

The first option we wrote down was an air attack on the Soviet base from which their attack on Turkey had been launched. Even that wouldn't be a simple affair; it would mean attacking the air defenses on the way to and defending that base, assuming it could be identified. If it couldn't be, or if there were several bases involved, a particular Soviet base could be chosen arbitrarily for a reply in kind.

If the ExComm wanted a larger response, or if the Soviets responded to that with another limited attack, the targets could be expanded to conventional attacks on more or all of the Soviet airbases (and missile sites, if they could be located) in the region close to Turkey.

Harry and I didn't want to see, or suggest, a US nuclear response to a non-nuclear Soviet attack, even if they replied to our own initial attack with expanding military actions. US nuclear first-use was at the core of NATO planning, but that had always been premised on much larger Soviet assaults in western Europe. I don't remember whether we included first-use of nuclear weapons in our list of increasingly-large hypothetical alternatives or not; if we did, it would have been reluctantly, in a nod to NATO doctrine, to be advised against. Crossing that boundary would have been an invitation to expanding nuclear war, disastrous to Europe however limited it remained regionally.

Some members of NATO would have had been uneasy, or worse, if they had known that American planners were proposing to limit a conflict arising from a Soviet attack on a NATO member to the immediate region or even to Europe. That went against NATO doctrine and European hopes for deterrence. Yet however destructive such a conflict might be in the region, any alternative involving nuclear weapons, whether limited or all-out, would be incomparably more destructive to Europeans.

No one in the ExComm, we were sure, would want to see more than the absolute minimum damage to Europe or Turkey as a result of our own actions in the Caribbean. (The Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. LeMay, was not in the ExComm; the JCS were represented in that by their Chairman, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who was not a fan of all-out nuclear war).

In that spirit, Harry and I agreed to include in our list an option we felt no one else would have thought of or dared to suggest: "no response." The logic of that was: treat the Soviet destruction of Turkish missiles as a reply in kind to our attack on their missiles, a tit-for-tat retaliation that we would take as closing the books on the crisis.

Some members of NATO wouldn't like that, starting with the Turks: unless they looked hard at the alternatives. Hawks in America might echo the Turks, but most

Americans—with the Soviet threat from Cuba eliminated—could probably live with the crisis being ended. Like it or not, any other US or NATO response looked far more likely to escalate out of control.

We didn't think the ExComm would buy that proposal, either. It was too much at odds with a decade of Cold War thinking. (And we knew that the diplomatic damage to the NATO alliance—as members absorbed the implications of this American non-response and the reasons for it—might be hard to repair.) But we personally felt it was worth consideration, under the circumstances. Given that, Harry and I were rather proud of ourselves for submitting it to our superiors as an option; we didn't think anyone else would have done it.

Saturday evening:

[During the day, Khrushchev sends a new message to JFK proposing a deal in which JFK gives assurances that the US will not invade Cuba and that it will remove the IRBMs from Turkey, while the Soviets will remove their missiles from Cuba. (This is usually described as contradicting the proposal of the night before, which is described as removing the missiles from Cuba in return for the no-invasion pledge alone, not mentioning the missiles in Turkey. It's thought by the ExComm that the Saturday message is "upping the ante," making a new demand, and may have been written by the Politburo overruling the more personal proposal by Khrushchev the night before. (Since then, it's been revealed that both were approved by the Politburo—or at least, the second was definitely approved by Khrushchev—and the Soviets did not regard them as being in contradiction). Actually, having read the several parts of the long Khrushchev message the night before, I didn't find them strictly inconsistent. The Friday night message said simply that if Kennedy gave a no-invasion pledge, then there would be no further "need" for the missiles ("which you call offensive") in Cuba. It did not actually say they would be removed, at all, let alone specify conditions under which they would be removed. To say on Saturday that this would require an additional condition, the "trade" with the Turkish missiles, did not directly contradict anything said Friday night. (It was consistent with the latter message to say: "Since, with no threat of invasion, we wouldn't "need" the missiles to prevent invasion of Cuba, we would be willing to remove them if you removed the missiles in Turkey (which you don't need to prevent invasion of Turkey)).

The IRBM "deal" was proposed in print by Walter Lippmann earlier, I think on Wednesday. Very probably, the Soviets interpreted this as a trial balloon (for the US domestic audience) encouraged by the White House. And I have always suspected that that was exactly what it was. I doubt very much that Lippmann would have proposed this during the crisis without clearing it with the Oval Office; even more likely, I've always suspected that the president asked Lippmann to do this.

We know that JFK was favorable to the proposal—or at least, disfavored rejecting it, since it looked "logical" to world opinion—on Saturday morning (to the horror of some of his advisors, including Bundy). Moreover, (I have to find this) there's a record that in the previous week, perhaps on Wednesday, McNamara had said in a meeting of the ExComm without the president that he thought such a deal was inevitable, the necessary resolution of the crisis. (The president rejected Stevenson's proposal of it on Saturday "at this time," i.e. before he had taken a forceful action in the form of the blockade. Stevenson had proposed offering it before or instead of any military action.)

Finally, we know—since Rusk revealed it in 1987—that JFK prepared on Saturday night Oct. 27 to accept this proposal for an open trade as a request from the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, who would be triggered by a US representative to do so.

I've read in one account that there was a meeting between Bobby Kennedy and Dobrynin during the second week (before the Saturday night meeting; perhaps

Thursday night) in which Bobby actually suggested this trade. (Before or after the Lippmann article?) Dobrynin may report this.

In other words, my guess is that the Saturday morning Khrushchev proposal—which JFK was disposed to accept, contrary to some of his advisors—was actually a JFK secret initiative, directly proposed to the Soviets by RFK or else suggested to them by Lippmann.

Had JFK simply directed that it be accepted—as president! Whatever the ExComm thought, or the Turks and NATO, and despite coup-like rage from the JCS (not only LeMay)—the crisis would have been over as of that morning. But he was persuaded not to do that. Bundy argued (check) that it would not only be the Turks who would be upset by this. The European members of NATO would see this as the US trading away (unilaterally, even if it were given the cover of a hasty NATO decision, strong-armed by the US) NATO weapons (pressed on them as necessary to their security) simply in order to improve its own security, a reduction in the kind of Soviet threat (from medium-range weapons) the Europeans had been living under for a decade. It would undermine US prestige, authority and leadership in NATO, and perhaps lead to the dissolution of NATO itself.

As we now know, JFK—whether he agreed or not-- was prepared to accept all these possible consequences by Saturday night to avoid war with Russians on Cuba and all that might follow from that. But he secretly wanted to try one more approach to an outcome that would not be so clearly a Soviet victory, the acceptance by the US of diplomatic and strategic parity with the Soviets.

I was not really expecting an air attack or invasion to be necessary. I knew that the preparations for an air attack by Monday and invasion by Tuesday or a few days later would be obvious to the Soviets, and I felt that Kennedy's apparent rejection on Saturday (which I approved) of their proposal to trade the missiles—which he simply ignored in his message-- would mean to them that he was ready to carry out those plans shortly. I thought Khrushchev *had* to back down and remove his missiles.

Otherwise they would be destroyed, and he would be challenged either to accept the humiliation without military response or to start a military exchange elsewhere with incalculable consequences not ultimately favorable to the Soviets. My knowledge that the US had a near-monopoly of strategic nuclear weapons was fundamental to my optimism at this point. I had drawn from the daily intelligence updates that the Soviets probably did not have nuclear warheads ashore in Cuba. Without those, the Soviets had perhaps three hundred weapons that could reach the United States. Depending on our level of alert, the U.S. had three to five thousand warheads in range of the Soviet Union.

Yes, Khrushchev could blockade Berlin and overwhelm our conventional efforts on the ground to regain access; but he would staring down the muzzle of a US first-strike if he did that. He could retaliate against the missiles in Turkey, and our

response might be one of the more limited ones that Harry and I had drafted earlier that day. But it might not be that limited, and if he considered responding in kind to a larger US retaliation, it would be like a blockade of Berlin: an invitation to a US disarming attack. Neither Harry nor I wanted to see a US first-strike under any circumstances whatever, but that didn't mean the Soviets didn't have strong grounds to fear it.

Thus, given the strategic balance, or rather imbalance, it seemed to me that Khrushchev had to back down and swallow his humiliation: that he had no real choice, and that he would be compelled to recognize that. (From what we know now of the Soviet side, that was pretty much the way Khrushchev saw it). In other words, looking back, my calculations of risks were closer to those of LeMay and the JCS rather than to JFK's and the doves. I wasn't aching to attack, as the Chiefs were; I had no investment in the objective of invading Cuba and removing the Castro regime, toward which they had been (unknown to me) aiming and working all year. But I thought the challenge to the US—as I understood it, the SU bid for full strategic and diplomatic parity with the US—could be repelled in the Caribbean without war and without a deal, simply by the threat of attack. Khrushchev's announcement Sunday morning that he was withdrawing his missiles seemed to show that I had been right; I wasn't that surprised by it, though it came earlier in the day than I expected.

In retrospect, I was right and wrong: more dangerously wrong than right. From Saturday to Sunday morning, both Soviet withdrawal and all-out nuclear war were possible and very close, depending on events that were not controlled by either leader.

Meanwhile, in the early evening a new directive came from McNamara, via Nitze to Harry Rowen to me. McNamara wanted a cable drafted for our ambassador in Turkey (Hare) giving him reasons why we wanted the IRBMs in Turkey to be dismantled.

[Some uncertainty in my recollections here, needed to be checked against the accounts. If I can't pin it down, I may have to omit this account altogether.

JFK wanted the warheads removed from the IRBMs, or the IRBMs "defused," and this made known to the Soviets. He hoped to dissuade the Soviets from attacking the Turkish missiles; and he wanted to be sure that if they did so, the Turks would not fire one under attack, if that were possible at all. I remember hearing the expression from someone: "He wants those goddamn things off the table." This implies that he expected to attack the missiles on Cuba and expected an attack in return on Turkey: but did he, really?

He had several times urged earlier that the Turks be persuaded not to have the missiles deployed at all. This is often falsely reported as his having *ordered* their "removal," but this is false, aside from the fact that they weren't there to be removed until the spring of 1962, and not operational until the fall. Nitze told him during the crisis (and reports in his memoirs) that he had raised this with the Turks several times, as had others, but they were adamant that the program be carried out. They were, on the one hand, proud to have these weapons on their territory, even though it made them targets; in fact, the latter consequence was a point of pride with them, to be accepting this risk for the alliance and the US. Moreover, they saw that presence as a guarantee of alliance and US support in any military conflict with the Soviets. So Ambassador Hare confirmed, in a cable that night, reporting the Turkish reaction to the Khrushchev proposal of that morning. Likewise, Finletter, our ambassador to NATO, was reporting the reaction of NATO members to the idea of a trade. Almost no one differed from the Turks; it must be rejected.

At the time, it seemed to me that JFK was indeed preparing to attack Cuba if his offer was rejected and was simply anxious to make sure that Turks didn't start WWII if the Soviets responded against them. It made sense, then, to try to disarm the missiles effectively (rather than rely on "control" by an American lieutenant with a key to the storage for the nuclear warheads). But as I recall, what I was asked to draft was an argument for dismantling the missiles and removing them altogether, in other words, to accept the Khrushchev demand for a trade.

I thought this was unnecessary. I thought it would be a gross mistake for the president to decide on this. The request that came down to me (assuming it came from the White House) indicated that JFK was at least considering doing this. (As indeed he was, secretly, but no one but Rusk knew that explicitly for the next twenty-five years). It would split, perhaps destroy, the NATO alliance, without need to do it.

Meanwhile, I had been given the task to persuade the Turks, not that this was necessary for the safety of the US and the world, in the eyes of the president (I could imagine how he might believe that, though I disagreed) but that it was *in their interest* to see their proud role replaced by a commitment of Polaris submarine missiles in the Mediterranean.

I labored over this for more than an hour, trying out phrases in longhand on a steno pad. It had been a long day, and I hadn't had much sleep for nearly a week. It was stiff going—I was trying to do something I totally disagreed with--and I was going in circles, discarding one page after another. I felt my brain was turning to sludge.

At one point in the evening Paul Nitze came by the desk where I was working and said, "How're you doing?"

I said to him: "I can't stand writing logic that *Turks* can pick apart."

I shouldn't admit, now, putting it in such chauvinist terms, but it expressed my general torment. Nitze said, "Well, do your best."

Half an hour later, he put me out of my misery; he said not to bother any more, McNamara had drafted a cable himself.

It was embarrassing. I had let him and Harry down. But I didn't feel apologetic. A little while later I went back to my hotel room, for the second time that week days. (I think I slept there Friday night, when we were all feeling optimistic.) I was feeling awful, exhausted physically but more importantly, morally. I thought I was part of something shameful. We were on the verge of a Cold War victory, and the president was going to throw it away, dishonoring us. When he didn't have to, facing the real risks, as I saw them. (As I foolishly saw them, looking back).

[I didn't know that Bobby was proposing a covert deal to Dobrynin as I was working. If I had, I suppose I would have felt even worse. In Blight book, in interviews and transcripts, hawks like Dillon and Nitze described comparable visceral feelings when they learned that RFK had actually proposed a deal—even a covert deal—Saturday night. "Not necessary"; diplomatically disastrous. Confirming JFK's prudence in hiding that proposal from them Saturday night.]

For the first time, I felt that my role as Harry's confidant and helper had put me in the position of trying (even though my inner resistance led me to fail at it) to do something I totally opposed. I had made the effort for Harry, not to embarrass him by refusing—the request came from McNamara, and he was tied up on something else—but I never wanted to do that again. I remember looking at my reflection in the bathroom mirror of my hotel room and thinking to myself: "I'm never coming back to this town."

I had no thought of leaving RAND. There was enough to work on back in Santa Monica. But I thought at that moment, I was done with consulting, I was done with helping people, friends above all, to carry out orders I didn't agree with. I was sickened at the thought of what was going to be announced the next morning: a shameful, unnecessary "compromise," that would destroy NATO.

The next morning, Sunday, I wandered back into the ISA offices in the Pentagon. People were standing around radios, in dazed conversation. Khrushchev had announced that he was removing the missiles. Cables were coming in from a NATO meeting, congratulating us on having turned down the deal. (The message McNamara drafted for Hare and Finletter had not been passed on). We had won.

4-12-12 version:

In the early evening of Saturday, Oct. 27, a request came from McNamara, in the ExComm, to Paul Nitze in ISA. Nitze passed it on to Harry Rowen, and Rowen asked me to do it. The request was to draft a cable to Ambassador Hare in Turkey giving him a rationale—to present to the Turks-- for why we were removing the US Jupiter IRBMs from Turkey. "In their place" we would be stationing a Polaris submarine in the Mediterranean waters near Turkey, with Polaris missiles that would cover the same targets as the Jupiters.

Certain positive aspects of doing this were obvious. The liquid-fueled, above-ground Jupiters, fixed in position, were not only obvious targets for tit-for-tat retaliation by the Soviets for a US attack on their own MRBMs in Cuba; they were even more vulnerable to attack than the Soviet missiles, which were mobile. A Soviet attack on them, with conventional weapons, would kill Turks, as well as a few Americans. And, of course, it would likely give rise to further reprisal by us or NATO—all the NATO nations, including us, were pledged to regard an attack on any one of them as if it were an attack on themselves. Any such response would put Turkey, and others in NATO, especially West Germany and Berlin, in danger of further attacks, possibly leading to nuclear war that would annihilate all NATO.

To remove the missiles from Turkey would break that particular link in the chain of escalation. It would take Turkey out of the front-line defense of NATO, reducing the danger to Turkish military and civilians in the crisis. (Although other

US and NATO bases in Turkey would still remain as possible targets for Soviet reprisal. They would no longer offer the symmetry of form and function with the Cuban-based missiles that made them salient targets for Soviet reprisal.) An attack on the Jupiters would recommend itself to the Soviets as signaling that—while they were not going to take an attack on their missiles “lying down” –to “eat it” as Nitze might have said (as his first reaction was to the news of the Soviet deployment)—or to regard it as something they had to accept without responding violently—they didn’t mean to expand the scale of the conflict beyond the terms on which the US was conducting it. (This assumes no US invasion of Cuba: “merely” the destruction of the offending missiles.) For us to remove the missiles would remove the temptation to the Soviets to make that relatively (emphasize “relatively”) safe response.

The Polaris sub with its missiles could not be attacked by the Soviets (they had almost no anti-submarine capability at all, and none in the Mediterranean). They didn’t offer a target to the Soviets; and they didn’t implicate the Turks, who, without the IRBMs, weren’t any more logical a target for Soviet reprisal than any other member of NATO.

NATO’s ability to deter *nuclear* attack wouldn’t be weakened by the substitution; on the contrary, it would be significantly strengthened, with the same Soviet targets now being covered by invulnerable US/NATO warheads rather than vulnerable ones that would, in a crisis or in the event of a Soviet false alarm, would tempt the Soviets to launch a preemptive attack against them (and others). In fact, for that very

reason, the US had for some time planned to make this substitution, perhaps as early as the spring of 1963. Really, the Jupiters should never have been deployed to Turkey at all. Eisenhower had seen them as unduly provocative almost from the moment they were promised to Turkey—not only by their vulnerability but their location, next to the Soviet Union—which was why he had delayed sending them as long as he was in office. Albert Wohlstetter had used them—in his 1959 Foreign Affairs article, “The Delicate Balance of Terror”—as his prime example of an offensive deployment that actually *reduced* the reliability of deterrence of nuclear attack. (So did I, in my article, “The Crude Analysis of Strategic Choice,” which formalized the RAND analysis of deterrence as a problem in decision theory). Their very vulnerability—in fixed positions above ground, using non-storable fuel and taking a considerable time to fuel in an alert, located within range of a huge arsenal of Soviet short- and medium-range planes and missiles—meant that they were “first-strike-only” weapons that could not survive a Soviet first strike. They could only be used to attack before they were themselves attacked, not in retaliation. Thus, if the Soviets in a crisis had reason to believe they might soon be attacked, or their warning system provided a false alarm of attack (as happened on both sides, frequently), the very existence of the Jupiters close to their borders gave the Soviets an incentive to preempt, to destroy them before they were launched.

That was also true of the thin-skinned, fixed-location, non-storable-fueled ICBMs in the US like the Atlas and Titan—the only kind of ICBMs we had (and the Soviets had, in very small numbers). These were less vulnerable than the Jupiters

only because, at far greater range from the Soviet Union, the Soviets had fewer bombers that could reach them, those bombers would provide very much longer warning time, and their fewer ICBMs were much less accurate and reliable. Nevertheless, it was the very existence of vulnerable weapons on *both* sides that made the balance of terror “unstable” in a crisis: “delicate,” in Wohlstetter’s argument. For deterring both a surprise nuclear attack and a preemptive attack, it would be better that they not exist at all (assuming the existence of retaliatory, second-strike weapons that were not so vulnerable, like our sub-based missiles and planes on alert that could take off on tactical warning). To remove them even from one side only—like the Turkish missiles—would make the balance less unstable. It would reduce the temptation on *both* sides to preempt on strategic or tactical warning, to reduce the damage the other side could inflict.ⁱⁱ

So—the Jupiters should, from the point of view of deterring nuclear attack on NATO, never have been deployed at all; or, now that they had been, the error should be corrected and they should be removed, as soon as possible, better late than never.

That was, really, part of the logic that had led to this request from McNamara (presumably from the president).

BUT: deterring nuclear attack was not what NATO—or the Jupiters—was about! US nuclear weapons, including the Jupiters, were primarily to deter *non*-nuclear attack (or the threat of it) by the Soviets’ supposedly overwhelmingly superior conventional forces. The strategy was based on the US/NATO threat to respond to a non-nuclear attack into West Europe (or Berlin) by a nuclear first-

strike against the Soviet Union, and first-use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. (To the extent there had come to be a possibility of Soviet first-use of its own tactical nuclear weapons in Europe—and this had come to be more than possible by this time—it was solely in response to the prior US deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe; without that, the Soviets, with their superior blitzkrieg forces, would not have needed to supplement those with nuclear weapons.)

From the point of view of this mission, the very vulnerability of the Turkish missiles (and of tactical weapons in Europe, though these were more numerous and more mobile) was an *asset*. It supported the credibility that a Soviet ground assault would be met by a nuclear NATO response, and not only a short-range response against Warsaw Pact forces in the theater but against the Soviet Union itself; the vulnerable IRBMs, aimed at the Soviet Union, were more likely to be launched than, say, Polaris missiles, on the incentive to “use them or lose them.”

It was in this role of deterring non-nuclear attack on NATO that NATO as a whole accepted the presence of the IRBMs, not only in Turkey but in Italy and the UK. What Wohlstetter (and I) saw as a serious defect in the deterrence of nuclear attack on the US was an asset in the eyes of the Europeans. Yes, it did not only threaten but ensure that in the event of a war with Warsaw Pact forces that did break out somewhere in Europe—the failure of deterrence, for whatever reason—all Europe would be engulfed and annihilated in all-out nuclear war. But that followed not only from the IRBMs but from the presence of tactical nuclear weapons and US bases throughout NATO territory and from the US first-strike that was

promised. All the NATO nations had already accepted that prospect, as the basis of the alliance. To be sure, it was an insanely reckless policy (I would say), but that was true with or without the Jupiters and Thors, and those simply made the threat of nuclear response more credible and effective, less likely to be challenged by a non-nuclear attack. Polaris missiles didn't offer that effect, wherever they were stationed.

This whole strategy had been sold to the Europeans by the Eisenhower Administration as essential to their security. Now we were proposing to modify it, apparently to make it safer for *us* to carry out a strategy that was more obviously in our perceived interest than in theirs. We were, after all, objecting to coming under a threat they had all lived under for years, from medium- and intermediate-range Soviet vehicles, a threat we had (with their approval) just posed to the Soviets. Were we admitting that this threat was intolerable to *us*; and that in our sensitivity to a threat which was not different from they experienced all the time, we were proposing to take measures that put them under unnecessary and unprecedented danger of attack?

When we had several times (at Kennedy's urging) raised the issue of removing the Turkish IRBMs with the Turks, they had objected strongly. They *liked* being in the position of providing an allegedly vital capability to the alliance, including the very fact that it put them under risk. For years, although they were members of NATO, they had wanted to be fully accepted as part of "Europe": an effort that continues to this day, obstructed by their Muslim religion and relatively

underdeveloped economy. The Jupiters were, to them, not only a symbol of power and advanced technology on their territory but a demonstration of their willingness to share dangers for the sake of the alliance, their importance to it and their commitment to it.

Now, the Turks were expressing their admiration to JFK for refusing to consider a trade of the Jupiters and the Soviet missiles, and showing anew their pride in accepting risks without hesitation in a confrontation with the Soviets. To imply that we were more concerned about the danger to them than they were was not only implausible but insulting. It contradicted their expressed, proud determination to stand firm, on the front lines.

[I don't remember clearly, at this point, whether the immediate proposal I was addressing with to remove warheads from the Jupiters—which was indeed, one demand JFK made to Nitze that day or the day before—or to announce immediately that they would be dismantled and removed, which was to be the effect of the proposal I was supposed to draft. There was, I think, some uncertainty in the Pentagon as to the actual operational status of the missiles, which had been formally turned over to the Turks only days earlier, by some accounts on Monday, Oct. 22 (the day of Kennedy's speech).

Supposedly the warheads were under at least nominal US control, as distinct from the missiles; this was, I believe, expressed by the fact that they were kept under normal conditions in a bunker separate from the missiles, to which an American

officer, a lieutenant, as I remember, (!) had the key. To get control of the warheads, the Turks would have had to (!) overpower him, despite the .45 pistol on his hip, and take the key. (In other words, a clearcut unauthorized action, though not a physically challenging one. The same was true for bombs on German bases for use by German pilots in US-supplied fighter-bombers, F-101 Starfighters. These were in "US custody" insofar as an American junior officer with a key around his neck would have had to be induced to give the key up to get the bombs out of a bunker. Yet I believe that at least some of these bombs were being carried under-slung on F-101s on alert; if so, the key would have had no role for these, and "American custody" would have been purely formal, essentially meaningless. (Khrushchev's concerns that the US had already given or would give control of nuclear weapons to the Germans were well-founded.)

Were the warheads on the Jupiters, or not? I don't think my superiors in the Pentagon were sure on this, even in the JCS. Definitely JFK had told Nitze—allegedly in an almost unprecedented dressing-down, that had left Nitze shaken—that the warheads must be removed, if they were not already, which indicates that the president was not clear on this. His concern, as it got through to me, was that if the Soviets launched a non-nuclear reprisal attack on the Jupiters, but failed to destroy them all immediately, the Turkish crews operating a surviving missile might launch a nuclear-tipped missile at the Soviet Union *without orders from higher NATO authority, i.e., without an order from President Kennedy and against his wishes*. Certainly they had the physical capability to do this: just as was true of every tactical

weapon in Europe at that time, whether in US hands or on European bases and was true for all our tactical and strategic bombers and missiles. Nowhere in the system [CHECK] was there a "permissive action link" that would prevent a local commander or crew physically from launching a weapon without a code signal from a higher commander, let alone from the president. (The same was true for the Soviet weapons).

To convey this concern to the Turks was to express distrust of them and their chain of command and discipline, our lack of faith that they could be relied on to keep their agreement not to fire these missiles without highest authorization from NATO, as reliably as our own troops or those of other allies. (In the course of discussions on Friday and Saturday, the British helpfully offered to ease the sting of this by "standing down the Thors-- conceivably, that might have meant removing warheads, if they were on otherwise-- on their own territory. But the Turks made no such offer, and clearly weren't about to. (Nor the Italians, as I recall).

This concern of JFK's that the Jupiters not be susceptible of being fired under attack does imply that he was taking seriously the prospect of attacking the Cuban missiles at that time (even though I believe that by that evening, if not sooner, he had resolved privately to offer a public trade of the missiles if that were necessary). Otherwise, there would have been no reason for him to worry about whether the Jupiters were fully operational or not; there would have been no prospect of their being under attack in the immediate future.

That much was in line with my own understanding at the time, that he was making a sincere threat, not a bluff, to remove the Cuban missiles by force. But I believed the threat was almost sure to succeed, without having to be carried out. My sense that the Soviets were so thoroughly out-gunned, not only in the Caribbean but in Europe, made me confident (unduly) that there was no need to insult the Turks by exhibiting our distrust of their firing discipline. Even if we did attack the Cuban missiles, I didn't believe that the Soviets would take the risk of retaliating against Turkey or Berlin, risking nuclear war.

At least, I infer that this was my confidence, however foolish it might appear, though I don't recall that actual calculation in my mind or being consciously that confident.

ⁱⁱⁱ I infer it now from my clear memory of my dismay at the instructions that I was given that evening: to justify to the Turks our imminent removal of the Jupiters (not just to disarm them, temporarily). From what I was reading of the cable traffic with Ambassador Hare and others from NATO, that would cause a considerable breach with the Turks. And it would seem to others in NATO (not all) that we were willing to let go of a vital part of their defensive and deterrent capability (whatever I or others might say, in all sincerity, to counteract that impression) in order to reduce a domestically sensitive threat to ourselves, whether by attacking Cuba or (even worse) by trading off European defenses against the Cuban missiles. We would be seen as unilaterally imposing our view of what was best for us, and perhaps for NATO, on NATO and specifically the Turks. It wasn't even clear that we had the legal right to do this, within the alliance, without discussion among the allies (all of them)

and a NATO decision. And even a proposal to do it, under these precise circumstances, had a great risk of splitting the alliance and causing disastrous distrust of us and our motives and priorities: a foreseeable risk that we would be evidently willing to accept, again putting in question the value we attached to the alliance.

The crucial context of this proposal, in my eyes, was that it was *unnecessary*. We were going to get our way, it appeared to me, probably by Khrushchev's acceptance of the offer that JFK had made hours earlier—to remove the Soviet missiles on an assurance that we would not invade Cuba—or, at worst, by our attacking the missiles (which I thought very unlikely to be necessary) with only a very limited Soviet response, if any. In either case—without our having raised this proposal (or still worse, announcing a decision to this effect)-- the missiles would be gone from Cuba, and NATO would be united and intact, having forced a back-down by Khrushchev.

That's what I felt. It doesn't look wise or creditable to me, fifty years later. But given my expectations, this very proposal looked to me likely to undermine the alliance, its confidence in our leadership and our commitment to Berlin and NATO defense, severely, perhaps fatally. To that extent, it would snatch political defeat from the jaws of victory. If known to Khrushchev, it might demonstrate American nervousness and weakness enough to encourage him to hold out for a public trade of the missiles in Turkey and Cuba. And even if it didn't become known to him

immediately, even if he did accept JFK's latest offer, the damage to our authority in NATO might be irreparable.

As I remember, I wasn't asked to draft a mere proposal—which I would have seen as damaging enough—but to announce a decision by the president. Of course, from my perspective, the president might or not actually decide, that night, to send that decision out; and if he did transmit it to Hare, or to our NATO ambassador, it could be tentative, with a decision to await some response from that end, which would almost surely be negative. But I *hated* being involved with it in any way. I didn't think such a cable should go out at all.

Why did I accept the task? Because Harry had been asked to do it, by his boss and McNamara. (I didn't know whether McNamara had been asked by the president, or whether it was McNamara's initiative, to be proposed to the president when it was drafted). I didn't work for McNamara. I was a RAND employee, not a Pentagon staffer for McNamara. It wouldn't affect my job at RAND (immediately or directly) if I had declined^{iv} But it would have let Harry down.

I sat at a desk in the ISA offices, outside the Assistant Secretary's office, writing on a yellow pad for draft to give to a secretary. It wasn't that hard to think of what to say; but I didn't believe in any of it. Whatever I said, the Turks were going to be insulted, humiliated, probably furious. We would be treating their proud stand with us contemptuously. Telling them that the missiles to which we had just

turned over custody to them were worthless: worth less than nothing, even dangerous, both to us and to them. Their leaders had invested some domestic political capital in responding to our request that they make themselves strategic targets of their superpower neighbor in the first place, overcoming local misgivings on the same grounds moving us today; now we were saying that their critics were right, and their leaders' pride that we needed and relied on their help was misplaced.

In general in a bureaucratic crisis, a "flap," I generated draft very fluently and fast (unlike situations where there was no urgency or deadline). That was a talent of mine that led me repeatedly to be called to Washington on short notice, to help on an Air Force or SecDef report or speech that needed fast work. (That was really why my salary had risen so rapidly, and why I was given so much freedom, the rest of the time, to follow my own pursuits). But this evening, nothing was coming out. I wrote a couple of paragraphs, crossed them out, tried again. I thought of arguments, discarded them before I started writing.

At one point Paul Nitze came out of his office and passed by my desk. "How's it going?" he asked me. I looked up at him, grimaced, and said, "It drives me crazy to write logic that *Turks* can pick to pieces!" Western chauvinism: but I remember the real anguish I felt at the time. Not totally consistent with my concern over what our Turkish allies would think of us. But that was precisely the point: we would lose the respect even of Turks, and we would deserve their disrespect. Almost unbearable. (Meanwhile, Khrushchev was being warned by his generals that if he

backed down in Cuba, he would lose the respect of Albania. His reaction, better than mine under the circumstances: "*Albania!*")

"Well, do your best," Nitze said. I kept on picking away at it. Half an hour later, with little more to show for my efforts, I was let off the hook. Nitze told me I could quit; McNamara had drafted the cable himself.

I went back to my hotel room, for the second time in the last four days. (Wednesday and Thursday I had been sleeping on a couch in Nitze's office, shaving in a men's room in the Pentagon.) The night before, Friday, I had left the Pentagon in an optimistic mood, after Khrushchev's long cable. This time I was exhausted, but more, drained, demoralized. Assuming the cable had gone out [CHECK whether it's reflected in the records, in FRUS] I felt Kennedy and McNamara had thrown away the possibility of a clean win in the crisis, that they had shamed us in the sight of our NATO allies. And I had been part of it, however reluctantly and ineffectively.

I remember looking at my image in the bathroom mirror, feeling disgust at the sight, feeling I had been part of something shameful. I remember the words in my head as I looked: I'm never going to be in this situation again. *I'm not coming back to this town.* I did it for Harry, but I'm never going to do staffwork that I believe is wrong, that I'm ashamed to be doing. ¹ Not for this administration, or any other.

¹ I broke that promise, a little over two years later. See *Secrets*, pp. 68-72.

The next morning, I had breakfast in the hotel and went back to the Pentagon. The word had just come in, in the clear from Radio Moscow, that Khrushchev had accepted Kennedy's terms and was in the process that morning of removing all the missiles from Cuba.

I read the cables from Europe. NATO had met that morning, before the announcement had come in (with the time difference). All our allies were congratulating us on our firm stand, our rejection of—in fact, our failure even to acknowledge—Khrushchev's demand that we remove the Jupiters from Turkey. Apparently the cable had not been read to the NATO meeting. Perhaps JFK had not sent it out after all.

End Notes

ⁱ (p. 11) See attached OpEd piece by me, "The Day Castro Almost Started World War III," New York Times, October 31, 1988.

ⁱⁱ From that point of view, the vulnerable, "soft" Atlas and Titan should have been removed as we acquired hardened Minuteman missiles and, especially, Polaris sub-launched missiles in the next year or so. And even the Minuteman missiles, in versions I, II and III (the current model) should have been retired in favor of a sub-based retaliatory force entirely by the time that Soviet missiles became accurate and numerous enough to make the Minuteman vulnerable. It's not too late—and certainly not too soon—to act on that assessment right now, as David Krieger and I argued in a recent op-ed in the Christian Science Monitor this month. The disadvantages of all land-based missiles, from the point of view of deterring nuclear attack, became comparable to those of the Jupiters and Thors within a few years of the Cuban Missile Crisis, or almost fifty years ago.

ⁱⁱⁱ (It would not have been entirely unjustified; in fact, from what we know now of Khrushchev's actual inclinations at the time, my guess at his calculations corresponded quite closely to his. Just as I rather recklessly supposed, he was dismissing contemptuously proposals by his military that he turn up the heat on Turkey or Berlin; he too was determined, like Kennedy, not to let the conflict become a hot war, or to escalate it if it did, locally. Yet he might well have lost control.)

^{iv} In fact, since RAND mainly worked for the Air Force, which would have hated this proposal, friction on this issue with McNamara could have improved RAND's standing with its main client, the Air Force. However, it was also true that RAND hoped for more contact and assignments with McNamara. The main links to that were the RAND alumni now working directly for McNamara, like Hitch, Enthoven, and Rowen, and Bill Kaufmann as a consultant; but among current RAND employees,

I was probably the closest to McNamara, except for the work by Dave McGarvey and Frank Trinkl on the SIOP for Alain Enthoven.